

Changes in Educational Program Completers Looking Back to 1985

Students packing for classes in the fall of 1984 likely included a Walkman, calculator, typewriter and some change to call home on occasion. Personal computers, if one could afford them at all, were too heavy to lug around and nobody had a cell phone or an iPod. Despite these “hardships,” students prepared for the world of work, hoping that their chosen field of study would prepare them for the challenges ahead.

Some of the most popular programs in that year still attract students in 2004. Business and management degrees continue to be one of the most popular options, particularly at the Bachelor’s degree level. Other programs, especially in healthcare, have increased the number of graduates, mainly in one- and two-year certificate programs.

Here’s a look at the numbers as reported by the National Center for Educational Statistics for the graduating classes of 1985 compared to 2004:

A total of 10,772 postsecondary awards were granted by New Hampshire institutions in 1985. In 2004, the number of completers was 16,578, a gain of 53.9 percent.

The total number of Associate’s degrees granted by New Hampshire institutions in 1985 was 2,619 compared to 3,322 in 2004, an increase of 26.8 percent.

The total number of Bachelor’s degrees granted by New Hampshire institutions in 1985 was 6,313 compared to 8,326 in 2004, an increase of 31.9 percent.

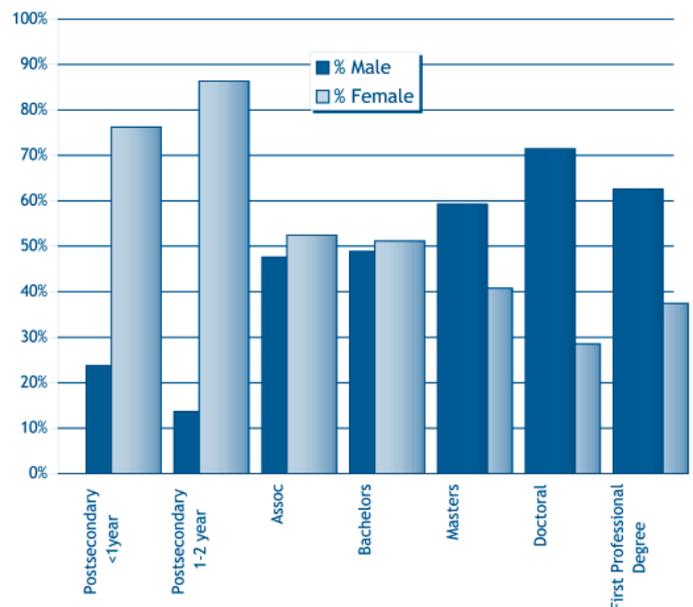
More graduates earned Bachelor’s degrees in business than in any other program. Two programs, general business administration and management with 795 graduates, and a separate program,

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Top 10 Bachelor's Degree Programs in New Hampshire, 2004	Completers
General Business Administration and Management	1,169
Psychology, General	491
English Language and Literature, General	453
Communication Studies/ Speech Communication and Rhetoric	335
Political Science and Government, General	315
Economics, General	237
History, General	236
Sociology	231
Elementary Education and Teaching	183
General Biology/Biological Sciences	173

Top 10 Bachelor's Degree Programs in New Hampshire, 1985	Completers
Business Admin. And Management, General	795
Computer and Information Science, General	346
Political Science and Government	309
Business and Management, General	304
Psychology, General	291
English, General	289
Economics	227
Marketing Management	170
History	166
Elementary Education	135

In 1985, more females than males completed postsecondary programs at most training levels



Source: National Center for Education Statistics

general business and management added 304 more completers. Preparing for a career in business is as popular today; the Bachelor's degree with the most completers is general business administration and management, with 1,169 completers.

Specialized business programs, including accounting and marketing seem to be losing favor - marketing baccalaureate degrees declined from 170 to 80, while accounting degrees increased only slightly, from 111 to 114. Criminal justice degrees at the Bachelor's level were few in 1985, with only 36 completers compared to 90 in 2004. The popularity of the criminal justice field may be spurred by popular forensic and criminal television dramas.

Some programs are perennially popular; political science, economics, English, and history graduates made the list of top ten completers in both 1985 and 2004. The reason is that all these programs are general in nature. Interestingly, the number of graduates at the

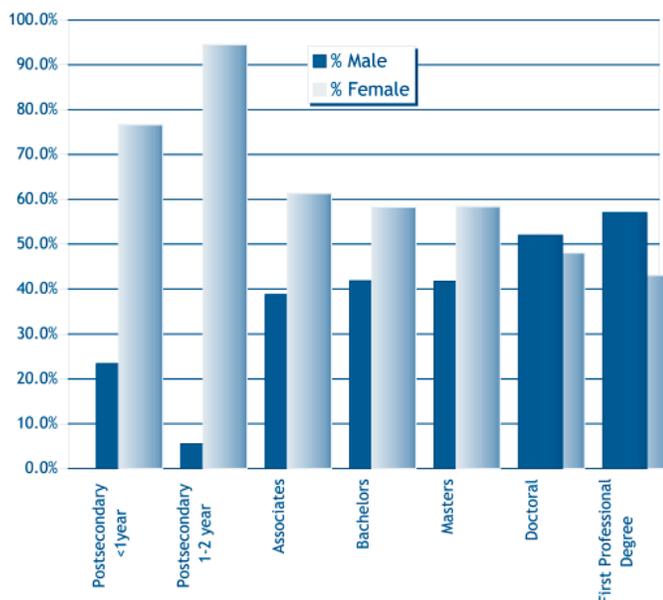
Bachelor's level in political science and economics is about the same in 2004 as it was in 1984. But as the number of completers at the Bachelor's level have risen by more than 30 percent, there has in relative terms been a decline in the popularity of these two programs.

Computer and information sciences programs have changed substantially since 1985. In the 2000 edition of the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP), new program definitions were added to accommodate entirely new areas of study in networking, Internet applications and other technologies that did not exist in 1985. Consequently, it is impossible to directly compare specific programs between then and now. As a general benchmark, the total number of

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By 2004, the gap was even wider in the trend of more women completers than men



Source: National Center for Education Statistics

Top 10 Associate's Degree Programs in New Hampshire, 2004 **Completers**

Nursing - Registered Nurse Training (RN, ASN, BSN, MSN)	337
Business Administration and Management, General	324
Culinary Arts/Chef Training	203
Accounting	154
Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement Administration	153
Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies	143
Business/Commerce, General	140
Commercial and Advertising Art	89
Legal Assistant/Paralegal	85
Liberal Arts & Sciences, General Studies & Humanities	77

Top 10 Associate's Degree Programs in New Hampshire, 1985 **Completers**

Liberal Arts and Sciences	339
Business Admin. And Management, General	205
Computer Electronics	121
Computer and Information Science, General	110
Electronic Technology	106
Nursing, General	106
Business and Management, General	97
Accounting	91
Computer Programming	87
Executive Secretarial	82

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completers in all computer and information science programs in a year can be compared: when all levels of training are included, there were 855 completers in 1985 and 802 in 2004. As our society gets more and more technology driven it might seem problematic that there is a decline in information technology completers.

Liberal arts and sciences was the program with the most Associate's degree completers in 1985 with 339 graduates. This program is still a popular choice in 2004, as it ranks sixth. The degree is a frequent option for students who are planning to transfer their credits toward a Bachelor's degree program. General business and business administration degree completers combined to total 302 Associate's degrees. General nursing was another popular choice for Associate's degree students in 1985, with 106 completers. By 2004, the number of graduates in registered nursing programs had tripled, driven by the growing demand for workers in this occupation. However, graduates earning Bachelor's degrees in nursing remained about the same, with 103 degrees granted in 1985 and 95 granted in 2004. This might suggest that there is a shortage of nurses with a Bachelor's degree or that the labor market for nurses has changed with the high demand for nurses and the rising cost of health care.

Other health care related programs with many completers in 1985 included medical-related Associate's degrees and one- to two-year certificates. Practical nursing was also very popular that year, and still is in 2004 at the certificate level, although the number of completers at postsecondary institutions has declined from 109 in 1985 to 89 in 2004. Some licensed practical nurse programs are available without attendance at a postsecondary institution.

Educational institutions, like any other organization, must react to changes in the marketplace. When demand for a related occupation declines, schools will shift their resources to programs in more promising areas of study. As an example, Associate's degree programs with fewer completers in 2004 than in 1985 include executive secretarial, tourism promotion operations, electronic technology, and industrial electronics.

There were fewer programs and completers in culinary arts/chef training, criminal justice/law enforcement administration, and commercial and advertising art in 1985, but these were among the most popular programs at the Associate's degree level in 2004. Criminal justice was also a popular field for Bachelor's degree completers in 2004. In 1985, a Bachelor's degree in general communications was awarded to 106 students. By 2004, completers of this concentration more than tripled, making this one of the fastest-growing degrees and the fourth most awarded Bachelors degree in 2004 with 335 completers.

At the Master's degree level, business and management degrees were the leading source of graduates both in 1985 and 2004. Again, as with computer-related programs, changes in CIP code designations require that comparisons be made at an aggregate level. When this is done, there were 546 degrees awarded in 1985 and 912 in 2004. There were 110 degrees awarded in accounting in 1985; in 2004, there were only 33. General education is also a commonly awarded degree at the Master's level. There were 56 awards in this program in 1985 and 115 in 2004.

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